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Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

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Bibliotherapy

BY MICHELLE A. VALLEE

Cycles in nature and daily routines give to our lives a secure movement, a sense of safety as well as purpose. When that movement is disrupted – no matter how slight the disruption may be – we are changed forever. We must now work at attaining the security, safety and purpose that was once unquestionably ours. This “work” is called grief or adjustment or coping. Whatever its name, it is experienced at every age and stage of life.

The ancient Greeks understood the neediness of this human work as well as the value of literature – and connected the two. Over the entrance to their libraries were the words, “Place of healing for the soul.” And it is within this wisdom that bibliotherapy has its roots. In 1966, the American Library Association officially accepted the following definition of bibliotherapy: “the use of selected reading materials as therapeutic adjuvants in medicine and psychiatry; guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading.” But for us, on a daily basis, it is simply providing a good book to help someone deal with a difficult situation. And whether we realize it or not, a dynamic interaction occurs between the reader and the story.

Briefly, that interaction – bibliotherapy – has three goals. It is intended to provide support, as well as help with gaining insights and expressing feelings. Stories are often used as communication links, offering a source of discussion between parent and child, teacher and student, counselor and client, husband and wife. The goals of bibliotherapy are accomplished in four steps. The first is an assessment process. We lovingly call this the “reference interview!” It is important for us to know something of the situation. When the

inquiry is made for a child, knowing the age, grade or reading ability is essential. Accurate assessment is crucial to the remaining components of bibliotherapy. It involves, not only our skill in determining what the patron’s needs are, but also our knowledge of the collection. Remember this? “The right book to the right reader at the right time!” It’s an old line but it aptly describes our part in this therapeutic process.

Fortunately for us reference sources abound. *Bookfinder*, especially *The Best of Bookfinder*, and *Growing Pains* are my personal favorites. *The Best of Bookfinder* includes selected titles from volumes one to three, and is subtitled “a guide to children’s literature about interests and concerns of youth aged 2 to 18.” It describes and categorizes 676 children’s books (90% of which are fiction) according to more than 450 psychological, behavioral and developmental topics. There is also easy access through subject, author and title indexes. Annotations give you a good idea of a book’s content, and are accompanied by suggested age appropriateness and related topics.

A typical entry, such as Fitzhugh’s *Harriet the Spy*, gives the following information: bibliographic data; subjects (maturation, friendship, peer relationships, avoiding others, separation anxiety); a lengthy annotation, age level (10-12), and formats available (Braille, cassette, paperback, talking book). At \$40.00 *The Best of Bookfinder* is a bargain. If you do not own it, you may have to wait for the next one. It is not included in the current *BIP*.

Growing Pains is another real bargain - affordable, compact and easy to use. Each of the 13 chapters offers good background information for the topics covered. The chapter on “Family,” for

example, identifies these subtopics: general issues, adoption, divorce, foster care, grandparents, parents working/not working, remarriage and step-families, separation, sibling rivalry. Each entry is followed by a suggested age range (for interest, not readability) and a short annotation. Chapters conclude with a list of related titles. There are also author, title and subject indexes. For the price of \$22.00, this can be a invaluable resource.

Often we are unaware of the need behind a simple request. But there are also the very frequent and very obvious ones: "Do you have a book about going to the hospital?" "I need a story about a grandfather dying." "Where are your books about divorce?" ...Or the new baby, starting school, moving... It is best to offer books that can help to develop general coping skills, as well as those that discuss a specific situation. A child in the hospital or moving or dealing with a family change needs books about adjustment, cooperation, loneliness and making new friends. Stories about overcoming fear or those that offer reassurance and understanding are helpful even when they are about circumstances other than what has been described by the patron.

There are many books (fiction and non-fiction) that deal with the concept of "family" as those who love you and with whom you live. You don't need to own *Daddy's Roommate* to deal with the topic. And blatant titles, for example, *My Big Sister Takes Drugs*, are not always the best either. The introductory remarks for each chapter of *Growing Pains* offer guidelines that are invaluable in purchasing as well as in service to the patron.

We are most often not aware of the three remaining steps in the therapeutic use of books because they occur during and after the reading. The second part of the process involves a real or imagined affiliation with the characters or situations in the story. The reader identifies with the motives or emotions of a character, or relates in some way to the events of the story. Feelings of aloneness or of being misunderstood are silently addressed when characters also deal with those issues. This leads to the third stage in which the reader experiences an emotional release. Tears are not uncommon but often, it is an unnamed sense of well-being that follows the reading/listening.

The final step in bibliotherapy is the integration of what is learned into daily living. Because the reader is touched in some way by the story or information in the book, an understanding develops and with it new ways of coping.

There is, of course, no way to prevent disruptions in our lives or others, but the written word can influence how we deal with them. Our profession offers us the opportunity to perform the crucial task of providing good tools for the "work" of building wholeness through bibliotherapy.

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- Michelle Vallee is the Children's Librarian at Cranston Public Library.*

Q: How many catalogers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: None. Catalogers only deal in "Illumination - sources of..."

Courtesy of Will Manley
Speech given at URIGLS Ingathering
April 1993

Rhode Island Library Association

Personal Membership Application and Renewal Form – January – December 1993

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Work Information: Position _____

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\$ _____ Dues Paid \$ _____ contribution to ALA Washington Office

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Kathy Ellen Bullard, Woonsocket Harris Public Library, 303 Clinton Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Censorship: Rising to the Challenge

BY RACHEL H. CARPENTER

On April 21st, I attended an open meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Seekonk Public Library at which the board voted to retain the book *Daddy's Roommate* by Michael Willhoite in its children's collection. *Daddy's Roommate* is an easy book written for three- to six-year olds. It is a story about a child whose parents are divorced. As in many divorced families the child spends time separately with each parent. In *Daddy's Roommate* the father is homosexual and lives with his partner.

Approximately seventy-five to one hundred people attended the public meeting at the library. About twenty-five people addressed the board. Two petitions had circulated in the town: one called for the removal of the book from the library; the other called for moving the book from the children's collection to a section of the library known as the Family Life Center, where primarily adults/parents would have access to the book. The task before the board was to vote on each issue, removal of the book and moving the book.

Those who addressed the board and their fellow citizens and interested others did so eloquently, forcefully, and sincerely. Many perspectives were represented, many ideas and attitudes were expressed, many concerns were shared.

And three main points predominated:

- 1) Removing a book from library shelves because of its subject matter or point of view is censorship and censorship is dangerous.
- 2) It is the library's responsibility to provide a broad array of informational materials selected according to the library's collection development policies, including the expertise and judgment of the librarians and the recommendations of reviewing sources.
- 3) It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to guide their children's growth, development, and education. This includes helping their children in selecting and using library materials and all other information resources (TV, movies, etc.) and also includes "being there" to field their children's questions and provide answers.

The Seekonk Public Library and its Board of Trustees, the citizens of the town of Seekonk, the

speakers, and all those in attendance should be commended for their participation in this forum. It was participation as caring and concerned citizens, parents, librarians, educators, and clergy. And throughout the voice of reason and tolerance spoke, not the loudest, but the most clear.

I ask that all librarians, library trustees, and library staff members in Rhode Island's libraries speak with this voice, too. It is our responsibility to be open and tolerant of all ideas and manners of expression and to keep our libraries free from censorship.

Over the summer, the RILA Intellectual Freedom Committee will be conducting a survey regarding challenges to public library materials. We feel it is important to share information about challenges and objections to specific titles or topics. The comments, both positive and negative, expressed by library users regarding materials, exhibits, collection development policies, etc., are important to the individual library and to the library community as a whole. They reflect the information needs and attitudes of users who no longer utilize only one community library but, with networking, resource sharing, and reciprocal borrowing, utilize library resources statewide. What is challenged and questioned in one library is challenged and questioned in all.

When the survey arrives, public library directors, please take the opportunity to respond. (If you have not yet received your survey, please call me at 456-8125.) We want to share this information and, we hope, create increased awareness, a network of mutual support, and a readiness to meet any and all challenges.

Rachel Carpenter is Reference Librarian at Rhode Island College and Chair of RILA's Intellectual Freedom Committee.

Help WANTED!! *RILA Bulletin Opening*

HOTLINE MANAGER: Relays applications from librarians interested in part-time or temporary assignments in libraries to libraries and other organizations seeking such skilled help. Keeps applicant file updated. Attends monthly RILA Publications Committee meetings. Write or call Mattie Gustafson, Managing Editor, *RILA Bulletin*, Newport Public Library, 847-8720, if interested.

Strategies to Engage the Young Adult Reader

BY SANDY DUPREE

I recently attended the RIEMA (Rhode Island Educational Media Association) Conference on March 4th. The program described herein was particularly inspiring.

"Booktalking" in itself can seem intimidating, but all of us booktalk in one form or another, each and every day. Sometimes it is on a one-to-one basis as a Reader's Advisor, while at other times, booktalking is more formalized.

Denise Gibbons, Youth Services Librarian at East Providence Public Library, brought the topic alive with helpful strategies for effective booktalks. In many ways, booktalking can be approached like storytelling. Some suggestions are: read the whole work and like it yourself; read as many young adult books as possible, to get a feel for what will "grab" the YA, as well as for what you would enjoy presenting; be honest. If your booktalk is the best part of the book and the YA listeners choose to read the whole story and find it disappointing, you will lose credibility. Denise has found that YAs seldom give you a second chance.

To prevent booktalking from seeming overwhelming several key techniques and practical tips were outlined. Use sources for booktalking suggestions. For example, Dynix has a subject heading - *Book talks* - that includes new and standard professional handbooks. Also, do not read or tell too much. The idea is to divulge just enough to entice the listener to read the entire book. Another tactic is to become the character yourself and practice. Do not booktalk more than four or five books at a time. If at all possible, have more than one copy of the book available, in addition to works by the same author or works in a similar vein, to "hook" your receptive listeners.

Suddenly, an unexpected visitor joined our session announcing, in a sprightly voice, "I'm Cimorene - my parents don't want me to learn fencing - it's not something a princess would do."

Actually, Denise had transformed herself convincingly into the main character from Patricia Wrede's delightful tale of the princess who doesn't want to just sit home in a castle, (*Dealing with Dragons*, 1990). Denise prefers to use science fiction, mystery or fantasy in her booktalks but anything you like can work, if you are committed to introducing your delight in the work to young adults.

Dr. Judith Mitchell, Professor of English at Rhode Island College, then spoke on the crucial issue of getting books into the hands of YAs through

their classrooms, and the broader goal of aiding YAs to keep the love of reading they enjoyed as children. One key is to introduce prospective junior and senior high school teachers to the value of YA literature as a classroom teaching tool, and to convince these potential teachers that reading and writing in context is far more effective than teaching grammar in isolation. Professor Mitchell subscribes to the theory that "the more you read the better you read" and that this skill is valuable in all areas of learning.

Another important consideration is that the best YA literature has a valuable place, in and out of the classroom, in allowing for individual differences while recognizing universal humanity. Controversial themes and motifs such as homosexuality should not be avoided by teachers. This literature can be used as a tool to aid YA students in becoming kinder as well as helping those at risk, physically or psychologically, to feel less isolated. Among the suggested YA authors suggested for use in the classroom were: Robert Cormier, Nancy Garden, Rosa Guy, Gary Paulsen, Ann Rinaldi, Cynthia Voigt, and Ursula Zilinsky.

This program highlighted aspects of the often over-looked realm of YA literature, specifically by offering concrete strategies for getting YA literature into the hands of YAs through teachers and librarians, and tactics for keeping it there! As we all know, YAs are a diverse lot and have interests that run the gamut from skateboarding to science fiction. Any effective methods for fostering a lifelong love of reading and the wonders it provides are most welcome.

Sandy DuPree is Reference Librarian at Coventry Public Library.

BULLETIN BOARD

RILA members and librarians in general should be aware that the Association has its own electronic news and information Special Interest Group (SIG) included among the various SIGs that can be accessed through the Library of RI (LORI), the electronic information and communication service established by the Department of State Library Services in February. Michael Silvia is the RILA SIG moderator and has initiated the online RILA news and information service with a message welcoming participation from all with comments, concerns, or questions relating to RILA. In addition, LORI is a great way to pass along news items for publication in the *RILA Bulletin*. Anyone with items suitable for the *Bulletin's* "People," Bulletin Board," or "Calendar" columns can send them electronically to News Editor, Frank Iacono, (LORI ID: Frankio).



The RILA Public Relations Committee, chaired by Frances Farrell-Bergeron, has embarked on an ambitious PR effort that recently was approved by the RILA Executive Board. The PR Committee is focusing on three areas of activity. Currently, public service announcements promoting libraries, prepared by Debbie Barchi, are being distributed to local radio stations for airing. Contact Fran or Debbie if you hear one on your favorite station. Also in the works is a monthly half-hour cable TV program to be aired on the state interconnect channel. The program will present library news and features that have a statewide impact, as well interviews with local authors and profiles of particular types of libraries and library services. Fran has put together a top-notch crew of eight highly-motivated individuals, all but one of whom have been certified in television production by a cable company. Anyone with ideas for program topics or anyone who would like to serve in back-up capacity on the crew also should contact Fran. Lastly, the Committee has designed a "Rhode Island Libraries Change Lives Campaign" which is in the first stages of implementation. The campaign consists of the design and printing of bookmarks and a poster to be distributed throughout the state, the solicitation of testimonials from well-known Rhode Islanders on how libraries have changed their lives, and a traveling exhibit featuring the poster and testimonials, with an invitation to library users to add their own stories. Hopefully, the exhibit will be ready to roll in September.



A groundbreaking ceremony to begin the Cranston Central Library Addition Project took place on May 14th.

The architect for the project is Norton Salk, and the General Contractor is Fairlawn Corporation. The 6,200-square-foot project was approved by the voters in 1990.

The addition will feature added shelving for forty thousand books, a Teenage Service Area, an audio materials display and listening area, a public personal computer room, an expanded information Services Area, a new gallery area, a seminar room primarily for literacy students and tutors, improved quiet rooms, expanded seating in the Adult Reading Room, a Library Card Registration Service Desk, and an improved public information display area.

Completion date is expected to be January 1, 1994. The expanded parking lot phase of the project should be completed this spring.



The Jamestown Philomenian Library expansion has been completed and all members of the library community are invited to stop in for a visit. Librarian Judy Bell also reports that with the new portion of the library now open, renovations on the rest of the facility are taking place and should be completed by June 21st.



"Growth from Gifts," the current exhibition at the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, features a selection of books and manuscripts given to the Library between 1747 and 1900, complemented by material from a gift of 1981. The exhibition, which was organized in conjunction with the recent "Newport Symposium: Golden Age to Gilded Age, Patronage in Newport," will remain on view through July.



When does fraternization in the library become sexual harassment? Do your library conduct rules infringe upon your patrons' rights? Just how safe is your library? These questions and other related issues are the focus of the Social Law Library's educational conference – *Disruptive Conduct in Libraries: Legal and Practical Responses to Sexual Harassment and Problem Patrons and Threats to Personal Security* – to be held on June 18, 1993, 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. at the Tremont House in Boston.

Featured speakers will include Ilene Robinson, Esq. from the Boston law firm of Sullivan & Worcester, discussing how to investigate complaints of sexual harassment, and Jason Berger, Esq. from the Boston law firm of Testa, Hurqitz & Thibault, who will give an overview of sexual harassment law. A discussion of problem patrons and the landmark New Jersey case *Kreimer v. Morristown* will be presented by Bruce Rosen, Esq., Mr. Kreimer's attorney, and James P. Wyse, Esq., counsel for Morristown, New Jersey.

In addition to the issues of sexual harassment and problem patrons, the conference will address crime prevention in the library with speaker Alan Jay Lincoln, Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell and author of *Crime in the Library*. John Connelly, President of Longwood Security of Boston will demonstrate security devices for libraries.

The cost of the conference is \$95.00 per person, which includes continental breakfast and luncheon. For more information about the conference or to register, please call Kelly Haglund at the Social Law Library, (617) 523-0018 x340.

PEOPLE

JOAN RESS REEVES, former chair and co-founder of the RI Coalition of Library Advocates (COLA) and former chair of the White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services Task Force (WHICLIST), is one of eight people recommended by the American Library Association Executive Board to President Clinton for appointment on the National Commission on Library and Information Science.

CORRECTION: Westerly Public Library's new director is Regan Robinson. We welcome her to RI and apologize for the incorrect surname printed in our previous issue.

CALENDAR

JUNE 9: Young Adult Round Table, "AIDS Update," Barrington Public Library, 9 a.m.

JUNE 10-11: RILA Annual Conference, Salve Regina College

JUNE 24-JULY 1: ALA Annual Conference, New Orleans



To the Editor:

We realize that up here in the northern hinterlands of Rhode Island, we tend to be forgotten by those more than two minutes away to our south. However, we really could not let Mr. James Wheaton's erroneous impression stand.

Pawtucket Public Library has a very interesting history of which it can be proud. However, it is NOT the oldest free public library in the state. That distinction, we believe, belongs to Harris Public Library. It was called Harris Institute Library when it opened as the first free public library, on October 3, 1868. It had actually been in the planning stages since 1863. These dates mean that it has already celebrated its 100th anniversary back in 1968, which means that 1993 is in fact our 125th anniversary! The advance notice of the official dedication opening ceremony in the Woonsocket Patriot proclaimed "This is the People's Library - free to all under proper regulations. Let the People cordially cooperate with the Trustees in making it a public blessing to all present and future residents of Woonsocket." The library building was originally in downtown Harris Hall, and moved to its present building in 1976. Perhaps Mr. Wheaton meant oldest public library building? We don't know. And it is also possible that even some other free public library can lay claim to being older than 125 years.

But in any case, Pawtucket must relinquish the distinction it laid upon itself in the April 1993 *RILA Bulletin*. We invite everyone to join us for our 125th celebration on Sunday, October 31, 1993.

Woonsocket Harris Public Library
Director and Staff

A Bibliography for Teaching about Native Americans of Southeastern New England

*Compiled for the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology,
Brown University by Joanna Foster Coppola*

This selective bibliography is designed to help teachers, scout leaders and others who are working with children and young adults. It suggests books, audiotapes and videotapes that will help children become aware of the long history and rich culture of the Native Americans indigenous to Southeastern New England: the Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Niantics, Pequots, and Mohegans.

The thirty-two page bibliography is divided into three sections. In the first two sections, "Books By Native Americans" and "More Books about Native Americans," fifty-one books are annotated giving some indication of how they might be used. The third section, "For Further Reading," is a list of books with short annotations. These are books by scholars that, while beyond the interest level of the average high school student, are good reading and provide information and fascinating insights into changing views of history and culture.

Along with books specific to southeastern New England, the bibliography includes several books that deal with Native Americans throughout the Americas because they are particularly useful in countering common misconceptions and stereotypes. To help teachers balance historical material with information about contemporary Native American life, books that present life today are specially marked in the margins.

A Bibliography for Teaching about Native Americans of Southeastern New England is available from the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, Mount Hope Grant, Bristol, RI 02809 for \$5.00 each; 5-9 copies \$4.00 each; 10 or more copies \$3.00 each.

"A good book is the purest essence of
a human soul "

Thomas Carlyle

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

I recently read a mystery novel by Sandra Scoppettone in which the detective-cum-heroine was computer-phobic. She did not know anything about computers. She did not *want* to know anything about computers. She had never used a computer, and had trouble breathing normally when in the same room with one.

The crises came when, in order to investigate a mysterious death, our heroine must access the data stored in a dead women's home computer. More specifically, she must log onto and interact with the large number of computer bulletin boards with which the victim was involved.

Initial panic gives way to grudging admiration. Grudging admiration turns into delighted amusement, which then quickly grows into single-minded obsession. Eating and sleeping take a distant second and third place to talking to Bubba on the boards. Our heroine lives to log on!

I confess my reaction to this transformation was one of incredulity. How could any sane, normal woman (or man, for that matter) become so entranced with a machine?

And then I logged-on to *LORI* (DSLS's *Library of Rhode Island*). I was assigned my very own username; I made up my very own password. I made my way, with some trepidation, but a great deal of deceptive ease, through the "guest" and new user screens. And the world opened up.

- I found out that over the next 30 days, there was a 55% chance of abnormally high temperatures in the Northeast United States.
- I "spoke" with NASA and learned about the status of the Magellan space probe and its efforts to plot the gravity density variations on Venus.
- I was told about the tradition of message taglines (i.e., "Remember, wherever you go, there you are.")
- I was invited to research a question about "dreamcatchers" and Sunday school plays in the 1870's.
- I was alerted to a severe thunderstorm warning in the Providence area (even as the skies grew dark and ominous around me).
- I was informed about an earthquake near the Grand Canyon that measured 5.5 on the Richter scale.
- I read about a travel bibliography for children.
- I yearned for the sunny 91° temperatures (33° Celsius) in Curacao and Guadalajara, and sympathized with the people of Beijing who were experiencing cloudy, cool weather.
- I searched for (and found) PIDs on HELIN.
- I perused TOMUS (Boston University's on-line catalog) and MELVYL (the University of California data base) for an out-of-print genealogical title.

In short, gentle reader, I was hooked.

And my fascination and wonder at this new (at least to me) world of computer bulletin boards and on-line data bases grows daily.

All is not candlelight and soft music. Sometimes it takes quite a while to connect to *LORI*. Sometimes it is quite an adventure trying to get back into CLAN. There are many options listed on *LORI*'s main menu that are not "up" yet. And the Library of Congress often tells me that the librarian is not there. (Does the Library of Congress have only one librarian?)

For the novice user it takes a while to realize that you had best pay attention to *Exit* instructions and "Help!" keys, often listed at the beginning of each data base or bulletin board - because once in, knowing how to exit or ask a question, is a definite advantage.

But truly the information age is alive and well in Rhode Island and thanks to DSLS and *LORI*, Rhode Island libraries can access along with the best of them. Accessing....accessing...

The RILA BULLETIN is published nine times per year by the Rhode Island Library Association. Managing Editor: Mattie Gustafson, Newport Public Library, Box 8, Newport, RI 02840 (847-8720), Feature Editors: Norman Desmarais, Providence College, Phillips Memorial Library, Providence, RI 02918 (865-2241) and Wendy Knickerbocker, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI 02908 (456-9605); News Editor: Frank Iacono, DSLS, 300 Richmond Street, Providence, RI 02903-4222 (277-2726); Editor & Writer: Judith Paster, 52 Seaview Avenue, Cranston, RI 02905 (467-8898); Jobline: Pam Stoddard, Government Documents Department, URI Library, Kingston, RI 02881 (792-2606); Advertising and Subscriptions Manager: Elizabeth Johnson, Cranston Public Library, 140 Sockanosset Cross Road, Cranston, RI 02920 (943-9080). A current list of RILA Executive Board Members and Committee Chairs is available in January/February Issue, 1993. Subscriptions: free to members; \$15/year in U.S.; \$20/year foreign. Deadlines: 1st of the month for features and 15th of the month for everything else. Advertising: \$130 full page; \$65 half page; \$40 quarter page; \$15 business card size. Change of address: members contact the Membership Committee Chair, Kathy Ellen Bullard, Woonsocket-Harris Public Library, 303 Clinton Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895 (769-9044). Subscription correspondence: contact Subscriptions Manager. For further information, contact the appropriate Editor. Technical Production: Verbatim, Inc., 769B Hope Street, Providence, RI 02906 (273-6930). Printing by Lewis Graphics, 1655 Elmwood Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920 (941-4444). LC 57-26438.

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